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# THE SOCIAL PROGRAM OF THE FEDERAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN AMERICA

CHARLES S. MACFARLAND

Secretary of the Federal Council and of its Commission on the Church and Social Service

THE Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America is composed of thirty-one evangelical denominations united, not upon the basis of a common faith and order, but under the principle of unity and diversity, uniting in one common service all forms of faith and order as represented in its constituency. The task of its commission on the church and social service is that of inspiring in the churches of the nation a deepening interest in the problems of the social order, and of bringing to bear the influence of the Christian church in the solution of our social problems.

Two great interests come together in this work, that of church unity and that of social service. The various forms of social uplift which are before the church offer one of the most vital and permanent of reasons and opportunities for federating the churches. On the other hand the opportunities for social service are of such a nature that they can be fulfilled, in large measure, only by the churches acting together. Social service is thus in part the basis of the Federal Council, and the Federal Council offers the basis for social service.

The task of the commission on the church and social service is indicated by the recommendations unanimously adopted by the Federal Council in Philadelphia in 1908, as contained in the report of the committee, published under the title *The Church and Modern Industry*, of which the following are typical utterances :

The churches of Christ in this Federal Council accept without reserve and assert without apology the supreme authority of Jesus Christ. Christ's mission is not merely to reform society, but to save it. He is more than the world's readjuster. He is its Redeemer.

The Church becomes worthless for its higher purpose when it deals with conditions and forgets character, relieves misery and ignores sin, pleads for justice and undervalues forgiveness. The Church stands forever for the two-world theory of life. The Church's doors open upon the common levels of life. They should never be closed. Its windows open toward the skies. Let their light not be darkened. The Church is not an end in itself. The services of the Church become subordinate to the Church's services to men.

At no time have the disadvantages of the sectarian divisions of the Church been more apparent than when the call has come for a common policy or a united utterance concerning such problems as modern industry now presents. This Federal Council may find some method for bringing the Protestant Christianity of America into relations of closer sympathy and more effective helpfulness with the toiling millions of our land. The Church does not stand for the present social order, but only for so much of it as accords with the principles laid down by Jesus Christ. The Federal Council places upon record its profound belief that the complex problems of modern industry can be interpreted and solved only by the teachings of the New Testament, and that Jesus Christ is the final authority in the social as in the individual life. The Church now confronts the most significant crisis and the greatest opportunity of its long career. We recognize the complex nature of industrial obligations, affecting employer and employe, society and government, rich and poor, and most earnestly counsel tolerance, patience and mutual confidence; we do not defend or excuse wrongdoing in high places or in low, nor purpose to adapt the ethical standards of the Gospel to the exigencies of commerce or the codes of a confused industrial system.

We deem it the duty of all Christian people to concern themselves directly with certain practical industrial problems. To us it seems that the churches must stand for equal rights and complete justice for all men in all stations of life; for the right of all men to the opportunity for self-maintenance, a right ever to be wisely and strongly safeguarded against encroachments of every kind; for the right of workers to some protection against the hardships often resulting from the swift crises of industrial change; for the principle of conciliation and arbitration in industrial dissensions; for the protection of the worker from dangerous machinery, occupational disease, injuries and mortality; for the abolition of child labor; for such regulation of the conditions of toil for women as shall safeguard the physical and moral health of the community; for the suppression of the sweating system; for the gradual and

reasonable reduction of the hours of labor to the lowest practicable point, and for that degree of leisure for all which is a condition of the highest human life ; for a release from employment one day in seven ; for a living wage as a minimum in every industry, and for the highest wage that each industry can afford ; for the most equitable division of the products of industry that can ultimately be devised ; for suitable provision for the old age of the workers and for those incapacitated by injury ; for the abatement of poverty.

While this social or industrial creed of the churches relates mainly to the problems of industry, it is thus far a significant indication of the attitude to which the Christian church is coming, with relation to all the questions of the social order. In the carrying out of these principles a national office of the commission, in association with the Federal Council, has become a center for information, inspiration and guidance in the social work of the churches.

Through interdenominational action, the commission will bring about coördination and coöperation among the denominations composing the Federal Council, including, so far as may be possible, the adoption of a common program, the use of common literature and the presentation of the united appeal of the gospel in its application to social problems and opportunities. Through this interdenominational coöperation will come the development of this aspect of the work of the churches, the education of the ministry and the churches for it, and the equipment of the churches for carrying it forward.

One of the most important matters in relation to the whole problem is that of the preparation of the ministers to meet these great tasks. Representing the churches of the Federal Council, the commission will coöperate with the theological seminaries, so far as it is invited and permitted, in the formulation of a policy with regard to instruction and practical training in this important subject.

While on the one hand our ministers have not been altogether prepared in the theological seminaries for this work, it is perhaps equally true that our social workers have gone out without adequate training as to their relations with the Christian church.

Therefore the same coöperation should obtain with the various schools for the preparation of social workers, that they, upon their side, may also come into a proper working relation with the Christian churches.

The instruction in social sciences and ethics in our colleges and universities, imparted to young men and women who will be leaders of the church life of the nation, will be the subject of investigation and mutual consideration, through conferences and inquiry.

The relation of the churches to the multitude of agencies for social reform and betterment is an important problem before the commission. Its influence, together with that of the denominations and churches which it represents, will be brought to coöperate, so far as possible, with such societies and movements, in relation especially to those measures which affect the moral and spiritual welfare of the people. This will include such matters as child and woman labor, occupational disease, Sunday labor, seven-day labor, the reduction of hours, the betterment of wages, health, housing conditions, vice and crime, and many other similar questions, including both social wrong and social wrongs, social righteousness and social rights. The relations between local charity organizations, social settlements and similar local work will be taken up and considered, by conference and inquiry, from the viewpoint of the churches.

Few people have realized the extent to which our home mission work involves social problems and includes the work of social organization. Indeed, the churches in home mission fields are often, if not generally, the initiators of the social and community institutions. This work will be studied, encouraged and developed. This commission and the home mission committee will work in coöperation to that end. In the foreign mission field also, this branch of Christian service has in some cases developed more fully than in our own land, especially in industrial, medical and educational work, which has lifted foreign nations to a higher social level. This work will be made the subject of careful research and continued development, by a working relation between the commission and the committee on foreign missions.

By the constant issuing of literature in leaflets and handbooks for serious study, and the use of the religious, daily and weekly press, the growing accumulation of material relating to social uplift and social causes will be put into shape so as to be used by the churches for education and incitement to service. Authors are now being found for a series of handbooks of a popular nature, to be placed in the hands of pastors for use in church classes.

The labor and trade journals are receiving bulletins informing industrial workers and managers of the deepening interest of the church in their common problems and duty.

Lists of speakers, lecturers and instructors are being prepared, and a lantern-slide bureau is being established and developed. The commission will confer with labor representatives and will send its delegates to their gatherings. Similarly it will confer with groups of business men and send delegates to their gatherings. It will confer in joint meetings of both of these groups in modern industry and issue its challenge to both of them to unite with the church in a common service. The secretary of the commission is a fraternal delegate to the American Federation of Labor.

Investigations will be made in various large and important industries, similar to the investigation of the steel industry by a special committee of the commission in 1910. Similar investigations in local communities will be made through pastors and other local agents. A report of such an investigation by a committee which spent several days on the ground has just been issued concerning the industrial situation at Muscatine, Iowa.

A nation-wide campaign is being carried on, endeavoring to cover all the states of the union, to secure one day's rest in seven for industrial workers. Committees in the various states are now being organized and the various forces brought together to this end.

The commission will continue to encourage the observance of Labor Sunday in the pulpits and by the churches of the nation. Last year thousands of pulpits carried out a program prepared by the commission, in many cases union services

being held, at which a large number of the churches of the cities came together.

More recent activities of the commission have been in relation to the Men and Religion Forward Movement. It now has the task of assisting in the conservation of the social-service work that has been begun in the various cities through the agency of this great movement. For this work a comprehensive program has been sent out to all the cities of the nation. A conference on this subject will be held at Silver Bay in June.

Under the combined auspices of the Commission and other agencies in the Federal Council a beginning has been made toward coördinating the churches and religious agencies which offer leadership in the work of rural betterment. An endeavor will be made to provide bibliographies for the aid of rural helpers, instruction as to social surveys by local churches, programs for community service for country and rural churches, and a bureau for public service, relating to all rural studies, methods and problems. In addition to these efforts, the commission will stand ready to take up any special social task that may fall to its lot.

The work of this commission must be done mainly through the various denominational agencies, and for this purpose a cabinet has been formed of the secretaries or other representatives of the various denominational commissions on social service.

The literature of the commission is assuming large proportions, and in addition to this the various denominational commissions are already providing the churches under their respective care with definite, concrete programs for the social work of churches or parishes.

At a conference held in Chicago in November 1911 representatives of seventeen denominations adopted this general program of the Federal Council commission and voted to enter into a working relation to carry it out. It looks as though in this great task which is before the church at the present moment she would move as one body; and it may be said that there has been no more potent agency in bringing about Christian unity than this task of social service.